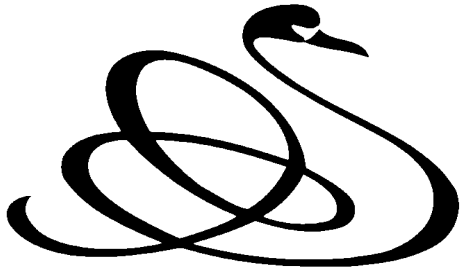


York Consulting

**DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION
AND SKILLS**

**EVALUATION OF FOUNDATION
DEGREES
FINAL REPORT**

September 2004



York Consulting

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DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS
EVALUATION OF FOUNDATION DEGREES

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Prologue

York Consulting Limited (YCL) was commissioned by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to undertake an evaluation of Foundation Degrees.

The aim of the project was to provide an early insight into the current nature of Foundation Degree activity, in particular because of the lack of comprehensive data on individual students. This work was undertaken in order to feed into the Foundation Degree Task Force Report to Ministers in July 2004. This presented a challenging timeframe at the inception of the project in April 2004.

YCL undertook a survey of current Foundation Degree students and courses. The scope of the survey covered full and part time students, and courses delivered in further and higher education institutions in England. A short self-completion questionnaire was developed and was available in both paper-based format and as a web-based on-line questionnaire.

The survey of Foundation Degree students provided some difficulties which ultimately would have an impact on the quality and reliability of the data collected, these included:

- lack of direct contact with students – there are no national records of student contact details, therefore the distribution of the questionnaire was reliant on the goodwill of ‘gatekeeper’ contacts – the programme leaders, department heads or administrators within the HEIs who do not have direct contact with the students;
- limited control over representativity of students, there was no control over which students from particular institutions responded to the survey and returned a completed questionnaire;
- skewed responses with a bias towards one institution that has a large number of Foundation Degree students linked to the public sector.

The data contained within this report should therefore be treated with caution and **should not be treated as a statistically representative** picture of the profile of Foundation Degree students in England. The data does however, provide a useful guide to the ‘type’ of individuals currently studying for a Foundation Degree in England.

York Consulting would like to acknowledge and thank all respondents and participants in this work for their time and input, without which research of this nature would not be possible.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This report presents the findings of research undertaken by York Consulting Limited (YCL) on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to evaluate Foundation Degrees. In this introductory section, in order to inform the reader, we present the background and context to the initiative.

1.2 The evaluation had the following aims:

- **to provide an early understanding of the nature and range of Foundation Degrees in order to inform short-term policy development;**
- **to investigate the characteristics and attitudes of current Foundation Degree students;**
- **to provide a clear assessment of the extent to which the Foundation Degree activities that have been developed and are being delivered are contributing to the achievement of the Foundation Degree objectives. These are as follows:**
 - to contribute to the reduction in skill shortages at the associate professional and higher technician level by equipping students with a combination of technical skills, academic knowledge and transferable skills that are valued by employers and students;
 - to expand the number and range of Foundation Degrees and contribute to widening participation by providing flexible and accessible progression routes for young people starting careers, those in employment and those returning to work;
 - to promote collaboration between employers, Regional Development Agencies, Sector Skills Councils, universities, higher and further education colleges in developing Foundation Degrees.

Context

1.3 Introduced in 2001, Foundation Degrees are new vocational higher education qualifications designed to provide specialist knowledge, employability skills and the broader understanding that equips graduates for future professional development.

1.4 Plans to introduce Foundation Degrees were announced by the Secretary of State for Education and Employment in February 2000. The Foundation Degree prospectus was published in July 2000 and set out the key national policy aims to:

- **address shortages of intermediate level skills in the national and regional economies;**
- **enhance the employability of students;**
- **widen participation in higher education and contribute to lifelong learning;**
- **rationalise and enhance the quality of provision below honours degree level¹.**

1.5 To meet these aims the core features of Foundation Degrees are:

- **employer involvement in the design and review of programmes;**
- **the development of skills and knowledge:**
 - **work specific skills relevant to a sector;**
 - **underpinned by academic learning;**
 - **key skills development;**
 - **generic skills development;**
 - **underpinned by a personal development plan, recorded and validated by the awarding university;**
- **application of skills in the workplace;**
- **progression within work and/or to an honours degree.**

1.6 More recently, the White Paper, 'The Future of Higher Education', published in January 2003, provided strong support for the further development of Foundation Degrees as the main 'engine' of further growth in higher education student numbers. The White Paper highlighted that Higher National Diplomas (HNDs) and Higher National Certificates (HNCs) were to be brought into the Foundation Degree framework, resulting in the expectation that most HNDs would be modified, or replaced by entirely new Foundation Degree programmes.

¹ Aims taken from *Foundation Degrees: report on funded projects*, HEFCE report June 01/40, 2001

Methodology

1.7 The methodology for the evaluation comprised the following key elements:

- **initial mapping;**
- **student survey;**
- **case studies.**

1.8 The evaluation was conducted over the period of April to June 2004.

Initial Mapping

1.9 An initial review of the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES), Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) and Individualised Learner Record (ILR) datasets was undertaken. A description of each of these datasets can be seen in **Annex A**.

1.10 At present there is no dataset that offers a comprehensive coverage of all students undertaking a Foundation Degree. The datasets available suffer from limited coverage and in their present detail cannot be linked to one another for comparative purposes. Due to these shortcomings the present research is necessary.

Student Survey: Method & Response Rate

1.11 A key element of the study involved undertaking a survey of Foundation Degree students. Due to the extremely short time period available for the survey and reporting in order to inform the Foundation Degree Task Force report, a 'mixed' methodology was employed.

1.12 The following elements, which are discussed below, formed the approach to the survey work:

- selection approach;
- questionnaire format;
- pilot;
- distribution.

Selection Approach

- 1.13 Lack of individual student contact details (only held by institutions) meant that it was not possible to select a random sample from the entire population of Foundation Degree students. The problem of sampling was further compounded by the short timescales, the Easter break during April 2004, students exams and students not being around during later parts of May.
- 1.14 The approach involved selecting 15 institutions to identify 'gatekeeper' contacts who could help to identify students or facilitate in the distribution of a questionnaire. These were selected on a random basis and stratified to ensure coverage of the nine government office regions and a balance between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Further Education Colleges (FECs). The potential sample was augmented by requesting that case study contacts also distribute questionnaires.
- 1.15 One region, the North East, was excluded after early identification that a very similar Aimhigher Foundation Degree questionnaire² was being distributed at the same time.

Questionnaire Format

- 1.16 A short self-completion questionnaire, designed to take around 10 minutes to complete, was developed and agreed with the DfES steering group. Two methods of questionnaire completion were provided:
- a paper-based questionnaire with reply paid envelope and introductory letter (see **Annex B**);
 - a web-based on-line questionnaire supported by a 'flier', issued by email or hard copy, which indicated the location of the website (using the same questions and format as the paper-based questionnaire).

Pilot

- 1.17 The questionnaires were piloted during the two pilot case studies conducted at the beginning of April. Responses from the pilots resulted in minor changes to the questionnaire.

² Aimhigher North East, 2004 – the results were made available to York Consulting by kind permission for the purpose of comparison.

Distribution

- 1.18 The first questionnaires were distributed at the beginning of May, with an end of May return deadline. A prize draw with twenty £50 high street gift vouchers were used as an incentive for students to respond.
- 1.19 The 'gatekeepers' were generally very helpful and supportive. Some institutions refused to participate either because of excessive surveying of Foundation Degree students or due to institutional pressures, such as Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) inspections.
- 1.20 All 'gatekeepers' were given the option of how they preferred to organise the questionnaire completion. Most opted for the paper-based approach distributing them to students via lectures or by post. In some institutions only a few Foundation Degree courses were included, whereas, in others the questionnaire was distributed to all students.
- 1.21 A total of 17 distinct 'gatekeepers' agreed to distribute the questionnaires, in addition some passed the questionnaire on to FE and other linked HE institutions. Students identified themselves as studying at over 50 distinct organisations (including FE colleges and employers).

Survey summary

- 1.22 A total of **841 useable questionnaires were returned**, 263 by the web-based route and 578 by hard copy questionnaire. We estimate that the questionnaire was distributed to 4,000 students, therefore the **response rate is approximately 21%**. The response rate for the individual methods is estimated at 19% for paper-based questionnaires and 26% for the web-based method.

Case Studies

- 1.23 Fifteen case studies were undertaken with institutions. They were designed in order to:
- provide a more in-depth understanding of delivery and development issues facing individual institutions;
 - provide more detail about the current student cohort and courses;

- gauge views and attitudes to Foundation Degrees by staff and students.

1.24 The case studies also enabled us to increase the questionnaire response rate as institutions distributed the questionnaire to Foundation Degree students where possible.

1.25 The breakdown of case studies by government office region is shown in **Table 1.2**. Of the 15 case studies, 11 were HEIs and 4 FECs, although where possible with the former, contact was made with 'satellite'/FE colleges involved in the delivery of Foundation Degrees.

<i>Region</i>	<i>Number of Case Studies</i>
Eastern	1
East Midlands	2
London	1
North East	2
North West	2
South East	1
South West	1
West Midlands	1
Yorkshire & Humberside	3
Other	1
Total	15

1.26 A total of 68 interviews were held across all case studies, between April and June 2004, with a variety of staff, including:

- **senior staff with a strategic role;**
- **programme leaders/course directors;**
- **Foundation Degree students;**
- **lecturers/tutors.**

Report Structure

1.27 The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- in section 2 we look at the **demand for and supply** of Foundation Degree courses;
 - in section 3, we examine the **design and delivery** of Foundation Degrees;
-

- in section 4, the **destination and progression** arrangements for students are explored;
- in section 5 we look at **employment engagement** and their role in Foundation Degree design, delivery and development;
- in section 6, **quality and improvement** issues are discussed.

2 DEMAND AND SUPPLY

2.1 In January 2003, the Government White Paper, 'The Future of Higher Education', named Foundation Degrees as the major vehicle for expansion in Higher Education:

- *“The bulk of expansion will come through new types of qualification, tailored to the needs of students and the economy. Our emphasis will be on the expansion of two-year work-focused Foundation Degrees, as they become the primary work-focused higher education qualification”.*

2.2 The Government announced that £32m of funding would be available over 3 years (2003-2006) to support the development of Foundation Degrees in key employment sectors and the creation of a national network, Foundation Degree Forward, to act as a centre of expertise.

2.3 In this section of the report we thus consider the demand for, and supply of Foundation Degree programmes.

Demand

2.4 In looking at the demand for Foundation Degree courses we specifically address the following issues:

- **meeting demand;**
- **student sample characteristics;**
- **qualifications;**
- **employment status;**
- **motivation;**
- **funding;**
- **awareness.**

Meeting Demand

2.5 It is very clear from the case studies that Foundation Degrees work best when they are demand driven, even though there are some cases of success where there has been a supplier push. Indeed, the popularity of a particular course will depend on how accurately the course design and content reflects the needs expressed by employers and other stakeholders.

- 2.6 There is an example where all Foundation Degree programmes at an institution have been developed as a result of demand expressed for a course. For example:
- **by employer groups;**
 - **by FE Colleges requesting the HEI to get involved;**
 - **because of demands expressed to FE contacts by employers, employer groups, professional bodies, SSCs and other networks.**
- 2.7 As a result, none of the Foundation Degree programmes at this particular institution have been offered as speculative courses, unsupported by evidence of demand and without the involvement of employers' networks.
- 2.8 There are also examples of where a general growth in demand has driven institutional policy in relation to Foundation Degrees. For example, in recent years, the tourism, leisure and sports sectors have grown rapidly in importance, in economic terms. This is evidenced in employment growth, increased government investment in order to improve facilities for high level training and coaching and the creation of new structures for the management of sport development.

Student Sample Characteristics

- 2.9 The majority of students responding to the survey are in their first year of study, as can be seen in **Table 2.1**. This is in line with the increase in numbers of courses available over the past three years. This distribution is similar to that evidenced in the North East data.

Table 2.1: Year of Foundation Degree	
Year	%
First	58
Second	33
Third	9

Source: YCL Survey 2004

- 2.10 Half of students responding to the survey are studying on a part time basis (**Table 2.2**). This is identical to the distribution evidenced in the North East data.
-

Table 2.2: Status of Foundation Degree Course	
Year	%
Full-time	50
Part-time	50

Source: YCL Survey 2004

2.11 Key points regarding descriptive characteristics (**Table 2.3**) of the survey sample, in relation to the North East, are as follows:

- **just under half (49%) of respondents to the survey are female.** The split in the North East data is 70% female;
- **2% of students are registered disabled;**
- **just over a tenth of students (11%) are from minority ethnic groups.** This compares with 5% identified in the North East survey;
- **in terms of age, 40% of students are in the 18-25 group, 29% are between 26-35 and 23% are between 36-45.** A small number of students (8%) are in the older categories. In the North East survey, 47% of students were in the 18-25 group.

Table 2.3: Key Characteristics of Foundation Degree Course Students	
Gender	%
Male	51
Female	49
Registered disabled	%
Yes	2
No	98
Ethicity	%
White	89
Minority ethnic groups	11
Age Group	%
18-25	40
26-35	29
36-45	23
46-55	7
56+	1

Source: YCL Survey 2004

Qualifications

2.12 Just under half (49%) of the Foundation Degree students have a highest qualification equivalent to a National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 3, as seen in **Table 2.4**. A further 32% have level 2 equivalent qualifications, with a small proportion (6%) having a level 4 or 5 equivalent qualification. Approximately one-in-eight students (12%) have level 1 equivalent qualifications. This is not surprising as these individuals may have been accredited with prior experiential learning gained through work.

Table 2.4: Highest Prior Qualifications of Foundation Degree Students

<i>NQF equivalent level</i>	<i>%</i>
Level 4 or above	6
Level 3	49
Level 2	32
Level 1	12
No qualifications	1

Source: YCL Survey 2004

Employment status

2.13 Nearly two-thirds of students (67%) were employed full time in the year prior to starting their Foundation Degree course. This can be seen in **Table 2.5**. About a quarter of all respondents (26%) also said they had been a student in the previous year.

Table 2.5: Main Employment Status in Year Prior to Foundation Degree Course and at Present

<i>Status</i>	<i>Year prior</i> <i>%</i>	<i>Current</i> <i>%</i>
Full-time employment	67	63
Part-time employment	23	26
Registered unemployed	1	-
Not employed	7	9

Source: YCL Survey 2004

2.14 Currently the balance has changed slightly with a greater proportion of Foundation Degree students being employed on a part-time basis (26%) and smaller proportion employed on a full time basis (63%).

Motivation

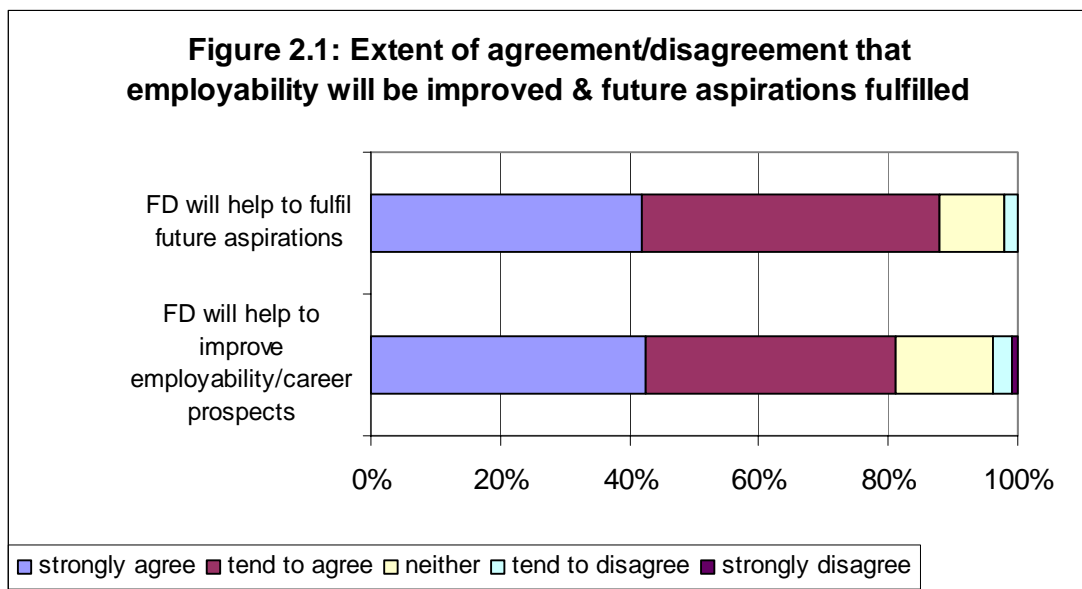
2.15 The main reasons for wanting to study a Foundation Degree, identified by students, relate to gaining an HE qualification, progressing to an honours degree and studying while at work, as follows:

- **to gain a higher education qualification (31%);**
- **as an opportunity to progress to an honours degree (21%);**
- **opportunity to undertake higher education while in work (16%).**

2.16 For some students (10%) the Foundation Degree is regarded as an integral element of training for their job. Students with level 4 or above qualifications were much more likely (28%) to state 'the emphasis on work-based learning', as a main reason, compared with all respondents (8%).

2.17 Just under two-fifths of students (38%) cite that their main hope as a result of completing their Foundation Degree is to gain an honours degree. For others, the motivation is to gain promotion at work (27%) and to gain new employment (21%).

2.18 Most students agree that their Foundation Degree will help to improve their employability/career prospects and will help them to fulfil their career ambitions, as shown in **Figure 2.1**.



Source: YCL Survey 2004

2.19 These above results are strongly reflected in the responses to the North East survey of Foundation Degree students.

Funding

2.20 Funding is a major factor influencing demand for courses such as Foundation Degrees. Students access a wide range of sources as indicated in **Table 2.6**, however the most common source used by nearly two-fifths of students (38%) is their own funding. This is followed by employer contributions (36%), student loans (18%) and bursaries (11%).

Table 2.6: Sources of Funding for your Foundation Degree Course

Source	%
Own money	38
Employer	36
Student loan or other loan	18
Bursary	11
Parents	9
Student grant (from local authority)	7

Source: YCL Survey 2004, multi-response question

Awareness

2.21 Over a third (36%) of all students heard about their Foundation Degree course via their boss or employer (**Table 2.7**). This is followed by just over quarter (24%) who heard direct from the institution. Other sources include Careers/Connexions and through a personal recommendation.

Table 2.7: How did you hear about your Foundation Degree course

Method	%
My boss/employer	36
Direct from institution	24
Careers/Connexions	16
Recommended by friend/colleague	12
Website	9
Radio/press advertising	8

Source: YCL Survey 2004, multi-response question

Evaluation of Foundation Degrees

2.22 Sub-analysis shows that the responses were skewed by those from one institution that has a large number of Foundation Degree students linked to the public sector. Excluding these responses the figures in Table 2.7 change to: my boss/employer (12%); direct from institution (38%); Careers/Connexions (28%).

2.23 The view from institutions is that in the early days of Foundation Degree marketing activity was quite difficult, even with the extra money given to institutions to pilot Foundation Degrees. Now that Foundation Degrees are being broadened out nationally, it is felt that the marketing is generally improving and helping to raise awareness. There are still some institutions however that feel that the national marketing has had limited impact. An example of attempts to market Foundation Degrees is given below:

Example: Awareness Raising (HEI)
<p>The University produces a general brochure about the Foundation Degrees that are on offer. Awareness is also raised by the University's involvement with employers; this is achieved by identifying employer networks, communicating with them and involving employers in designing the content and methods of delivery of proposed new Foundation Degree programmes.</p> <p>This is a slow process and requires patience and persistence and hard work. The University has found this approach to be fruitful in many ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• it improves general relations between the University and the community by involving local employers;• it improves the University's knowledge and understanding of what skills are most important to employers;• it provides a great opportunity for employers to collaborate in the design and delivery of Higher Education qualifications.

2.24 There is also a strong view that raising the profile of a major new qualification takes time. Referrals by satisfied students and employers will be the most powerful form of marketing. There remain concerns that Foundation Degrees may not prevail into the medium/longer term, despite assurances from ministers.

Supply

2.25 In this section the supply of Foundation Degree courses is explored under the following headings:

- **institution philosophy towards Foundation Degrees;**
- **Foundation Degree course types;**
- **recruitment;**
- **retention;**
- **addressing skills shortages;**
- **widening participation.**

Institution Philosophy towards Foundation Degrees

2.26 The general institution philosophy towards Foundation Degrees is that they are supported and perceived as worthwhile. The programmes are seen as an opportunity to encourage local take-up of education opportunities and to provide a progression route in to higher education.

2.27 There does appear to be a difference between the approach at pre-1992 universities and post-1992 universities/FECs. Despite some evidence of the former established universities showing real commitment to Foundation Degrees, they are in general perceived as more of a development area and there would appear to be some way to go to embed Foundation Degrees into the general consciousness of the institution and to make them an obvious option to students. This can be seen in the following quote:

- *“There is still some entrenched opposition to Foundation Degrees in some pockets of the university”.*

2.28 Some consultees have explained that within such traditional institutions they are learning how to adapt to the flexible delivery nature of Foundation Degrees.

2.29 In general Foundation Degrees are more of an integral part of delivery/curriculum strategy with the post-1992 universities and FECs:

- *“The college is putting itself 110% behind them, being their main focus in HE”.*

2.30 Such institutions are often in a more advantageous position to offer Foundation Degrees, with examples of Foundation Degree development at colleges being based on:

- **long experience of operating HNDs and HNCs;**
- **links that have been developed with employers over several years;**
- **building on existing areas of expertise within the college;**
- **responding to market knowledge about growth in demand for Foundation Degrees in particular vocational areas;**
- **learning from the experience of Higher Education partners and from the best practice in the region.**

2.31 Some institutions see Foundation Degrees as an opportunity to develop expertise in niche markets and to become market leaders in the locality and even nationwide in the provision of specific Foundation Degree courses. There are also examples of where Foundation Degrees are a vital part of regional HE policy.

Example: Regional Significance of Foundation Degrees (HEI)

The University has a strong and well-developed regional policy, designed to cope with the demands of such a large and diverse region. The University's regional policy for the delivery of Higher Education to as many people as possible incorporates the use of Foundation Degrees as a key element which will help to widen participation and provide more local opportunity for higher education to be accessed across the region.

This in turn will help to retain learners in the region. The vocational relevance and employability advantages of the Foundation Degree will also help graduates find jobs in the region, retaining talent and improving the quality of the labour pool. Providing local access to higher education avoids the need for learners to travel outside of the region and maybe not return.

Foundation Degree Course Types

2.32 A significant feature of the sample of Foundation Degrees covered through the student survey and the case studies is the diversity of subject area. This is likely to be linked to the fact that the courses are tailored to a specific vocational area or have been designed in response to a niche market.

2.33 The spread of subjects in our sample as shown in **Table 2.8** are focused on three major areas, Education and Training, Law/Social Studies/Politics/Economics and Engineering. The education and training areas particularly relate to early years and teaching and learning support courses. There are large numbers of individuals from the Police Force studying courses in Police Studies and public sector engineering areas covering public sector engineering courses and civil aircraft engineering.

2.34 There are some significant differences in the gender profile of certain courses with Education and Training (83%), Arts (72%) and Sports (83%) biased towards females and courses such as Engineering (92%) and building (91%) biased towards males.

Table 2.8: Sector Relating to Foundation Degree (Full Sample)		
Sector	%	Female %/ Male %
Education and Training	28	83/17
Engineering	27	8/92
Law/Social Studies/Politics/Economics	12	34/66
Arts – Creative Arts and Design	4	72/28
Health, Complimentary Medicine and Safety	3	52/48
Business/Management Studies	3	44/56
Computer Sciences and Information Services	3	64/36
Media Studies	3	62/38
Hospitality Tourism and Leisure	3	74/26
Science and Mathematics	2	59/41
Environmental Conservation	2	36/64
Building, Constructions and Property	2	9/91
Sports Studies/Science	2	83/17

Source: YCL Survey 2004, sectors with 2% or more are represented

2.35 When students from the institution mentioned earlier which has large numbers linked to the public sector are removed, some of these percentages change significantly. For example Education and Training rises to 36%, Law/Social Studies/Politics/Economics falls to only 1% and Engineering falls to 10%.

2.36 The subject areas that were covered as part of the case studies and used to inform the analysis are as follows:

- Health Related Exercise and Fitness;
- Chemical Technology;

Evaluation of Foundation Degrees

- Applied Microbiology;
- Business Management;
- Managing Voluntary and Community Organisations;
- Hospitality;
- Childcare;
- Project Management;
- Pop Music;
- Sports Science;
- Aircraft Engineering;
- Pre-16 Teaching and Learning Support;
- Fine Art Practice;
- Ornithology;
- Public Sector Studies.

2.37 In 2002, the Foundation Degree Support Team (led by Pricewaterhouse Coopers) produced a taxonomy of Foundation Degree provision, as shown in **Table 2.9**. This was developed in order to identify key features and trends in recognition of the diversity of provision.

Table 2.9: Taxonomy of Foundation Degree Provision	
Type	Descriptor
1. Meeting a niche employment need	This category is defined as a niche where there is shortage of skilled workforce as identified by employers or by SSCs and the former NTOs.
2. Meeting an essential employee need	Groups of employees identified who previously had no or limited development and progression routes into HE.
3. Delivering sustainable regional collaboration	FDs offered by established consortia with a particular culture of co-operative working. Totally committed to FDs and to adopting a common approach to their implementation across the consortium through tight central co-ordination.
4. Adaptors	FD provision developed by consortia migrating from existing HNDs but incorporating the essential vocational dimension of FDs.
5. Re-badgers	Provision currently based on a type of non-migrated, re-badged HND.
Source: Foundation Degree Support Team 2002	

2.38 The following observations were drawn as a result of this taxonomy being applied to the case study courses (some are allocated to more than one category):

- **none of the case study Foundation Degree courses were perceived to be 'rebadged' HNDs (category 5);**
- **eight courses were seen to be meeting a niche employment need (category 1);**
- **seven Foundation Degree courses appear to be meeting an essential employee need (category 2);**
- **eight are delivering sustainable regional collaboration (category 3);**
- **six are identified as adaptors (category 4).**

2.39 These are positive results as the level of direct employer involvement in the design and delivery of the Foundation Degree curricula tend to decrease the further down the taxonomy one goes.

Recruitment

2.40 Take-up and recruitment rates for Foundation Degrees have been good and the vast majority of case study programmes (80%) report no recruitment problems. Examples of reasons provided by institutions for this positive take-up include the following:

- students are able to study for a HE qualification in their local college;
- a Foundation Degree is generally cheaper for a student to undertake in comparison to an honours degree;
- clear linkage between the industry and HE qualification;
- recruitment reflects the amount of liaison and collaboration with employers;
- lack of places on honours degree courses combined with the impact of student fees and loans.

2.41 An example of an approach to recruitment is given below:

Example: Recruitment (FEC)

The college uses interviews, tests and individualised guidance/advice sessions to recruit all students. Students are directed to the HND or Foundation Degree according to academic record and performance in initial tests. During the first year, for some programmes in Engineering and Technology, the students are taught in joint groups (HND and Foundation Degree students in same groups) because the module content for some skills is the same.

At the end of the first year, there are a range of exit qualifications available for those students who wish to leave; also at this point, changes to programme registrations can be made e.g. if an HND student is performing well enough to move to a Foundation Degree. This process has always been used by the college in the past to recruit and select HND and ordinary degree students.

The process continues to serve the college well as:

- it helps improve student retention;
- provides ample opportunity for students to gain valid exit qualifications if they do choose to abandon their studies;
- has contributed towards a high rate of progression to Honours Degrees (50%);
- evidences excellent employment outcomes for students, including students completing Foundation Degrees.

This differentiated approach to students and their programmes of study has enabled the college to actively manage recruitment, appropriate course choice, achievement and progression.

2.42 There are several recruitment issues that institutions have raised that should be considered. These include the following:

- over-supply;
- 'backward migration';
- student academic background;
- market erosion.

2.43 In some cases where other government initiatives have been helping to encourage recruitment, for example, early years and classroom assistants, there is a risk of generating over-supply of Foundation Degree provision. This could raise questions regarding optimisation of resources across the university sector if many more courses are developed which then struggle to recruit students.

- 2.44 There is also evidence of 'backward migration' taking place at one institution. The local college is extensively recruiting graduates who have been unsuccessful in achieving a place on the honours degree course at the university. This indicates an element of displacement as the Foundation Degree has not necessarily focused on the core market and the displacement effect leads to the crowding out of less-able students.
- 2.45 Some institutions have also indicated that they have made mistakes at the recruitment stage by underestimating the importance of prior knowledge when recruiting students onto Foundation Degree programmes. However, academic background in some course areas is an important factor and needs to be considered as students without this underpinning knowledge can struggle on their Foundation Degree course. This may then have an impact on retention rates.
- 2.46 A further issue has arisen where a college is keeping a parallel offer of both the HND/HNC and Foundation Degree programmes in many areas. This is not without problems since some market erosion effects have been noticed by college staff responsible for monitoring recruitment to all courses. For example the existence of the HNC in Engineering prevents the take-up of Engineering Foundation Degree courses in some specialist areas.

Retention

- 2.47 Retention is not a significant problem for the majority of Foundation Degree courses. Two-thirds of the case study courses indicated that they had no problems with retention rates. Three programmes have had some retention difficulties, with just two having extensive problems. Indeed, nearly all respondents (96%) to the student survey said that they expected to complete their Foundation Degree. Those who do not expect to complete indicate reasons relating to their specific course and their own personal circumstances which might influence their possible drop-out.
- 2.48 An example of good practice is of the institution providing students with an exit certificate if they leave the course. This can be seen below:

Example: Recognition of Learning (HEI)

One feature of the institution's design of Foundation Degrees is to ensure an exit certificate can be issued. Exit certificates recognise any learning that has been undertaken up to the point when a student may choose to leave the course. This helps to support continued learning in the future particularly if it is interrupted by external factors.

- 2.49 The case studies indicated that where problems arise they are largely due to attrition in year one of the Foundation Degree course. A common explanation for this is students having difficulty in coping with the work/study balance. One institution for example, found that their first cohort of students on a particular Foundation Degree programme were largely mature students, i.e. over the age of 23. They experienced severe retention difficulties and, with the benefit of hindsight, feel that the course was running too quickly with a lack of support for people coming from a non-traditional education background. The second cohort of students was mainly UCAS applicants and the retention rate improved significantly.
- 2.50 A further Foundation Degree course had early withdrawals due to students having a misunderstanding of the course. The institution therefore took steps to ensure that student expectations were more realistic from the outset.

Addressing Skills Shortages

- 2.51 Surveys of current and future skills shortages identify particular pressures at associate professional and higher technical level jobs. Foundation Degrees were thus designed to address these skills shortages with employer input, providing individuals with the specialist knowledge, work-related skills and broader understanding required.
- 2.52 Indeed, in July 2003, the Government launched the National Skills Strategy '21st Century Skills – Realising our Potential'. One of the aims of the strategy was to introduce a more flexible and relevant qualifications framework which will allow people to build more precisely the skills they need. It is intended that Foundation Degrees will be a key part of the new qualifications framework by supporting progression to higher education through the vocational route.

- 2.53 The general approach to Foundation Degrees is that they are perceived as a major opportunity for the institution to address strategic aims such as tackling skills shortages. At one institution for example, the feeling is that the Foundation Degree concept helps to build capacity across an entire workforce in a given sector/industry. It does this in the short term by providing intermediate skills training, but will also build capacity in the longer term by encouraging more people to work towards higher level qualifications, moving on from Foundation Degree to honours degree level and even to postgraduate level in time.
- 2.54 Some Foundation Degrees appear to be fulfilling a 'qualification gap' rather than specifically focusing on addressing skills shortages, although wider benefits include the 'professionalisation' of certain types of job.
- 2.55 The issue has also been raised that the impact of introducing a Foundation Degree in a skills shortage area will only be seen in the longer term. Thus it is difficult to comment on the effectiveness of Foundation Degrees in addressing skills shortages at this early stage.

Widening Participation

- 2.56 Foundation Degrees are designed to both widen and increase participation. They may be particularly attractive for people who have qualifications other than A levels, for mature students and for students in employment but these are not the only possible target audiences. Some people with few formal qualifications may be able to demonstrate their potential to succeed on a Foundation Degree through their existing knowledge and experience.
- 2.57 Institutions generally see Foundation Degree programmes as a crucial part of their Widening Participation strategy. Both at the strategic level and the operational level there was a widespread consensus that Foundation Degrees in principle and practice were contributing to this philosophy. Most programme leaders acknowledged that there were students studying for Foundation Degrees who would not otherwise have been likely to engage with higher education.

2.58 One university felt that nearly all of the students on their current Foundation Degree programmes would not be applicants for any traditional undergraduate courses at the institution. It was felt that these students would not traditionally apply to the university as it is seen by the local community as a very “traditional academic” institution, research-driven, very “set in its ways” and not welcoming to mature students (despite a long history of Adult Learning). Local people would be more likely to apply to the post-1992 university in the city, partly because of its polytechnic history. As a result, Foundation Degrees are very much seen as an integral part of their widening participation strategy. An example from another institution can be seen in the following quote:

- *“The University is keen to attract as wide a range of people in terms of students, staff and researchers as possible and to engage with employers, the community and the professions much more widely than it has in the past”.*

2.59 There is also evidence from students that the Foundation Degree has enabled people to access or continue in education, when in previous circumstances, this may not have been feasible:

- *“I feel that the Foundation Degree has enabled me to continue in education. I doubt I would have been able to do so without it”;*
- *“I think they are a good idea for people like myself, who work to support their family and want to further their education. This allows me to continue working and further my career prospects. I would not have been able to do this if I had to stop working”;*
- *“I think that Foundation Degrees are a really good way to encourage people into higher education”;*
- *“The Foundation Degree has given me a chance I never would have had to pursue a higher education qualification”.*

3 DESIGN AND DELIVERY

3.1 In this section the design and delivery of Foundation Degree courses is considered.

Design

3.2 The design of the Foundation Degree is crucial to ensure that the course meets the needs of students and employers. Key issues in relation to the design of Foundation Degree programmes include the following:

- **validation;**
- **Foundation Degree development;**
- **stakeholder involvement.**

Validation

3.3 Partnership and collaboration is an essential element of the Foundation Degree. Foundation Degree programmes need to be validated by a degree awarding institution and this awarding body is responsible for ensuring quality and standards.

3.4 A number of case studies highlighted a tension between the FEC and validating HEI. There is an element of frustration with the FEC wanting to develop an innovative approach to delivery of the Foundation Degree that meets the needs of students, but at the same time having to conform to the standards set by the traditional validating HEI. This can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“In reality the FE institution acts as an ‘honest broker’, with limited ability to influence design of the Foundation Degree”;*
- *“We are at the mercy of the validating institution”.*

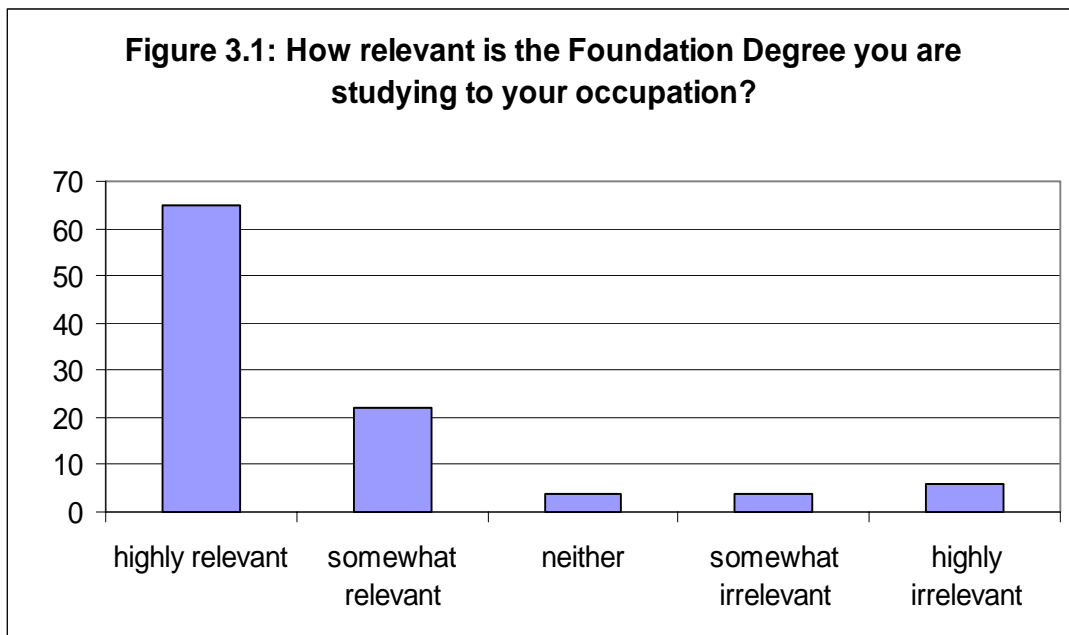
3.5 However, this is recognised as a ‘healthy tension’ by some FECs, who see the benefit of the HEI being involved in not only the validation of the Foundation Degree, but also in keeping an eye on quality.

3.6 Despite the difficulties surrounding this issue, institutions are devoted to achieving the right balance in terms of a Foundation Degree that meets the need of students that is within the structure of an academically rigorous and approved framework.

Foundation Degree Development

3.7 It is essential that the Foundation Degree curriculum is designed in order to provide the experiences to the individual that will enable the learning outcomes to be achieved. It is important that employers are involved in the design and regular review of Foundation Degree programmes and this is discussed in detail in Section 5.

3.8 Students are in strong agreement that their course is relevant to their occupation. **Figure 3.1** indicates that nearly two-thirds of students (65%) feel that their Foundation Degree is 'highly relevant'.



Source: YCL Survey 2004

- 3.9 Without exception, institutions indicated that there has been no ‘re-badging’ of HNDs (taxonomy group 5) and Foundation Degree programmes have been written from scratch. It was recognised that the former would have been unfaithful to the principle of Foundation Degrees and impractical in many cases. Many of the case study institutions expressed concern over the potential development of a ‘national’ Foundation Degree. As well as fear over the ‘re-badging’ of HND courses, it was felt that the benefit of HEI involvement in the validation process and in keeping an eye on quality would be lost.
- 3.10 A number of institutions did acknowledge however that in terms of curriculum development, there were some areas of existing HNDs that would be of value as part of the Foundation Degree, so elements were adapted and included. This is evidence of a flexible and pragmatic approach by individual programme leaders and Foundation Degree development teams.

Examples: Foundation Degree Design

Example 1 (HEI):

The content of the older HND course was used as a guide to developing a new Foundation Degree programme. The HND is still run in parallel, but the new units that have been written have been developed specifically for the Foundation Degree which is seen by staff and students as more academically demanding than the HND.

Example 2 (HEI):

The University has for many years offered a range of HNDs, but always with modules clearly designated as either level 1 or level 2. This made the process of re-engineering HNDs and turning them into Foundation Degree courses fairly straightforward. Also, the HNDs offered had all been run to meet local market needs and were never offered speculatively. Therefore the Foundation Degree strategy of only offering programmes in response to market needs has been a fairly natural development, drawing on past practice. The university now considers that HNDs are “a thing of the past” and the Foundation Degrees are the preferred qualification for the future.

3.11 There are also cases of some internal frustrations within institutions in terms of Foundation Degree development. An example is of a Quality Department in one University, which highlighted a concern with academic departments that are trying to push forward under-developed Foundation Degrees based on former HNDs. In this instance the Quality Department has been rejecting these proposed Foundation Degrees. This demonstrates a positive element of internal self-regulation regarding approval of Foundation Degrees and emphasises the strength of institutional frameworks for Foundation Degree development.

Stakeholder Involvement

3.12 The role of stakeholders such as professional bodies and the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs) in the design and development of Foundation Degrees is variable by institution and Foundation Degree course.

3.13 There are examples of where Sector Skills Councils have sat on employer reference groups and thus helped to inform Foundation Degree framework development. On one programme, the SSC relevant to the sectoral area has been involved in the development of the course through their involvement with the European Industry Body.

3.14 It has been suggested however that reform of the National Training Organisations (NTOs) and creation of the SSCs has resulted in a hiatus in communication with people at institutions not knowing who they should be communicating with.

3.15 The view also exists that Foundation Degree development requires more meaningful collaboration with the Sector Skills Councils (SSCs). One institution felt that the SSCs have not taken enough time to understand the academic element of Foundation Degrees and are not necessarily in a position to inform programmes which deal in very specialist subject areas:

- *“The SSCs have meddled in something that they don’t understand”.*

3.16 There are also examples of the Regional Development Agency (RDA) funding a Foundation Degree development/promotional post. The RDA has worked closely with the Regional Universities Association to promote and coordinate Foundation Degree policy. The latter has set up a regional collaborative group to deal with issues related to Foundation Degrees. This RDA has also in the past provided funds for the development of new Foundation Degree programmes.

3.17 This particular HEI did indicate that working with the RDA has been difficult however. Despite benefiting from the small amount of development funding being made available for Foundation Degrees, the feeling is that the RDA are contributing the bulk of their efforts on selected economic development targets derived from their regional economic development strategy.

3.18 Many institutions are confused as to the role of Foundation Degree Forward (FDF) in the development of Foundation Degrees. It is felt that their role should be more clearly defined and that they should be taking a more direct and 'hands on' role in Foundation Degree development in the future. A review of a stakeholder consultation exercise by YCL for DfES revealed that stakeholders perceive that the main responsibility of FDF should be in supporting institutions in their development of Foundation Degrees and to raise their profile in the education and professional sectors. Other areas where stakeholders would like to see FDF operating in include:

- **linking SSCs with the various learning providers;**
- **establishing minimum guidelines for work placements and employer engagement;**
- **dissemination of best practice in Foundation Degree design, development and delivery;**
- **ensuring that they represent the whole supply-side and are the voice of institutional policy makers.**

Delivery

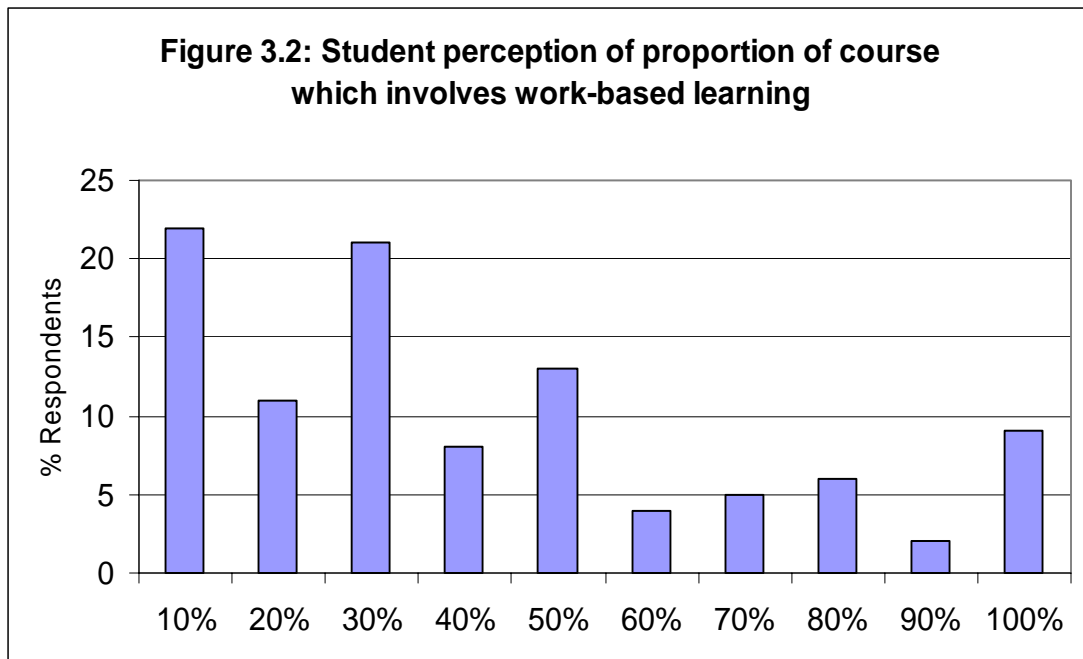
3.19 In this section we consider the delivery of Foundation Degree programmes and specifically focus on the following issues:

- **work-based learning;**
 - **benefits of work-based learning;**
 - **limitations of work-based learning;**
-

- **work-related learning;**
- **delivery methods;**
- **support arrangements.**

Work-based Learning

- 3.20 Work-based learning is a fundamental element of the Foundation Degree. Within the generic structure of a Foundation Degree there is an expectation that a minimum of 30 credits per level is delivered through work-based or work-related learning. Work-based learning should underpin, and be a major component of, the learning, teaching and assessment strategy. Ideally, it should provide the context in, and mechanism by which, the majority of learning outcomes are delivered.
- 3.21 The extent to which work-based learning has been incorporated into Foundation Degrees is variable. Only one of the Foundation Degrees that were considered as part of the case study analysis had limited work-based learning in place. Eight of the Foundation Degree programmes were classified as having 'partial' work-based learning, while 6 courses offered 'extensive' opportunities.
- 3.22 Almost two-fifths of survey respondents (39%) stated that their course involves a proportion of 50% or more work-based learning directly with an employer (**Figure 3.2**). Just over a fifth of all students believe their course only has a 10% proportion of work-based learning directly with an employer.



Source: YCL Survey 2004

3.23 Nearly three quarters of students (73%) feel that the amount of work-based learning is an ideal proportion. Among the quarter who felt it was not right, a proportion of between 30% and 50% of work-based learning was felt to be more suitable. An example of an approach to work-based learning is given below:

Example: Work-based Learning (HEI)
<p>The full-time Foundation Degree in aircraft engineering runs for 42 weeks a year. Students study for 14 weeks at the institution and then spend 28 weeks at KLM UK Engineering. KLM ensures that the Joint Aviation Authority (JAA) standards and requirements are met at all times and so at the end of the course, students achieve an industry recognised qualification.</p>

3.24 The precise way in which work-based learning is incorporated into a Foundation Degree programme will be determined by a range of factors such as the mode of study (full-time, part-time, distance learning), the nature and structure of employment in the sector, the views and involvement of employers, the profile of the student body, the requirements of professional bodies, and the specific learning outcomes of the programme³

³ City & Guilds (2003) Templates for Developing Foundation Degrees

Benefits of work-based learning

3.25 The main benefit of the work-based learning element of the Foundation Degree as perceived by students is that it enables students to put in to practice what they have learnt in the classroom. This is essential in order to improve knowledge and understanding and to maintain students' enthusiasm towards their course. This can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“A balance of practical work and theory is essential to maintain interest in the course”;*
- *“All practical skills I have learnt have either reinforced theory taught in lessons or given on the job training relating directly to skills required in the workplace”;*
- *“Already I have put into practice in my job role some of the things I have been taught on the course. It will help me now in my own work and in the future”;*
- *“It allows me to put my learning in to action and discuss issues with other professionals”;*
- *“It gives you the opportunity to apply your knowledge at work and another way to extend your skills and knowledge”;*
- *“It helps to see the systems actually in the workplace to give an appreciation of how they work and how they are operated”.*

Limitations of work-based learning

3.26 The perception and definition of the work-based learning element does vary by institution. Whilst recognising the benefits, some institutions point to the nature of the student group as a barrier to carrying out work-based learning. This includes those students who are using the Foundation Degree as a basis to change career. This is highlighted below:

- *“We do not require students starting on a Foundation Degree course to be in employment relevant to their course subject. There are some students who are not necessarily in a role that would facilitate work-based learning, for example a sufficiently responsible role. Many students have enrolled on the course because they wish to change career and some students do not wish their employer to know they are studying. For these reasons the inclusion of work-based learning into the syllabus is problematic and asking students already in full-time employment to take up a work placement is not feasible in most cases. However the institution is putting a lot of effort into increasing the employer involvement in our Foundation Degrees”.*

3.27 There are also issues in relation to the ‘suitability’ of an HEI to be able to coordinate opportunities for students. This is linked to the fact that pre-1992 universities do not necessarily have the experience and expertise of engaging with employers in this way:

- *“We do not have a proper understanding of work-based learning, and don’t have the appropriate facilities to offer WBL to our students. We rely on the FE colleges to organise the WBL. FE colleges have better employer relationships set up, and therefore are better placed to arrange work placements”.*

3.28 Student perceptions on the problems associated with work-based learning are focused on 3 key themes. The first of these linked, to the issue above is the difficulty of actually organising a placement to enable work-based learning to be carried out and the lack of support from the institution. In some cases, it is the responsibility of the student to organise their work-based learning placement. These issues can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“I had to organise a placement – the company weren’t too keen to take me on even though they didn’t have to pay. The college should organise specific places which are relevant to the course”;*
- *“If you are not in employment it is difficult to complete work-based learning”;*
- *“My work placement was good but it is entirely up to you to find it. There is no support from the college and some people get away without doing a placement at all”;*
- *“The college does not provide adequate assistance”;*
- *“My situation does not allow me the appropriate amount of time for work-based learning, due to staff shortages and other studies”.*

3.29 A further concern raised by students is that there is simply not enough work-based learning as part of their Foundation Degree. Increasing the opportunities is perceived to have a positive impact on knowledge and understanding:

- *“I feel that more work-based learning would reinforce the theory I have learnt. However, there is a lack of it so I find it hard to relate the theory”;*
- *“There has not been enough work-based learning on the course. This would provide more understanding of how the theory-based aspects of the course relate to future work”;*
- *“There is little work-based learning, especially if you are not sponsored by an employer”.*

3.30 The final issue of concern to students is that the work-based learning they have experienced has little, or limited relevance to either the subject of their Foundation Degree course or to their employment. The benefit of this work-based learning to the students is therefore reduced. This is illustrated in the quotes below:

- *“I have changed my job since I started the course and my work is not always relevant to my course topic”;*
- *“The work-based learning is sometimes too specific to a particular job and needs to be more flexible to suit all forms of work”;*
- *“The work-based learning is indirectly related to my course. It is just a coincidence that I can learn certain aspects while at work”;*
- *“Work-based learning is very ‘hit and miss’ and in no way structured to the course”.*

3.31 The difficulty of ensuring suitable work-based learning opportunities is an issue that has also been raised by institutions. In many cases, this is related to the difficulty of engaging employers and is discussed in more detail in Section 5. In the following example, the student background is given as a factor that may cause difficulty in arranging work-based learning for students:

- *“It can be a real difficulty for students in part-time work already to add in work experience. Where relevant and possible we always try to use the student’s part-time work as the basis for their placement, but that is not always possible. We have to ensure that if this does occur then the integrity of the course is maintained and learning outcomes are addressed”.*

Work-Related Learning

- 3.32 In many cases ‘work-related’ learning is being adopted rather than ‘work-based learning’. As well as the difficulties with work-based learning highlighted previously, this may be because the nature of the sector that the Foundation Degree is related to does not lend itself to comprehensive work-based learning. One institution also felt that, at the operational level it would be critical to the on-going development of Foundation Degrees to not over prescribe the work-based learning element in order to retain flexibility.
- 3.33 The analysis of the 15 case study institutions indicated that three-quarters had the intention of adopting a fully-integrated approach to work-based learning. In reality only a fifth of institutions were actually carrying this approach out, with four-fifths of institutions facilitating other approaches to learning through work.
- 3.34 Examples of other approaches to learning through work that have been adopted include work-based simulations, research projects, work-shadowing schemes and employer case studies. In many cases these replicate the workplace environment whilst allowing students to be assessed appropriately.

Example: Work-related Learning (HEI)
<p>The first year of the Foundation Degree consists of a series of six case studies covering the relevant educational content and relating directly to employers supporting the delivery of the degree. The case studies may be contemporary or past problems which are defined, explained in practice through visits to the employer premises and resolved by the students through continued visits to employer premises and through coursework. In some cases students come up with innovative solutions which may not have been considered by employers. Through this case study approach, learning may well not be sequential but this is managed by tutors who identify areas that need to be covered to filling gaps.</p>

Delivery Methods

3.35 A range of methods of delivery are utilised across the Foundation Degrees covered in the survey of students, as seen in **Table 3.2**. Traditional methods of teaching and learning such as lectures (67%) and tutorials (51%) remain the most common. Around a third of students respectively use distance learning (24%), e-learning (28%) and workplace mentoring (41%) methods as part of their Foundation Degree.

Method	%
Lectures (on campus)	67
Lectures (other)	23
Tutorials (on campus)	51
Tutorials (other)	23
Distance learning	24
E-learning	28
Mentoring in the workplace	41

Source: YCL Survey 2004, multi-response question

3.36 Part-time students are much more likely to use distance learning and e-learning methods of learning.

3.37 Having this diversity of teaching methods is generally seen as positive by students, as can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“There is a good balance of tuition and discussion time, time given for workshops and visiting speakers”;*
- *“There has been a good variety of teaching methods within the modules taught and resources provided. The lecturers have been very supportive and encouraging”.*

3.38 One example of the methods of study that are available to students is that of online delivery, support and study skills packages, offered by 6 of the 15 case study Foundation Degree courses. Examples of how on-line delivery has been used across the case study programmes include the following:

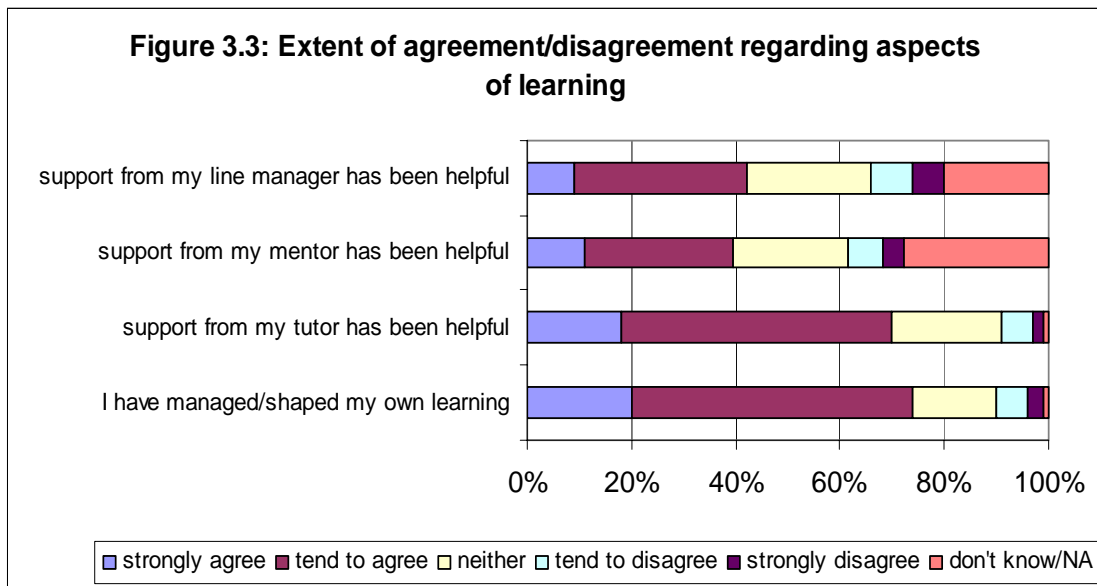
- **as a mechanism to provide copies of all lecture notes;**
- **for the delivery of a specific module;**
- **‘chat-room’ facility to enable to network and to engage in dialogue.**

- 3.39 There are mixed views about the benefits of on-line delivery. One case study institution was very positive about encouraging on-line learning with one specific Foundation Degree integrating one online module per year. This online element was identified by the Foundation Degree Review Team as being a key strength of the course. A course director was also considering a wholly online Foundation Degree programme.
- 3.40 Another institution also introduced an on-line module into one of their Foundation Degree courses. This decision was made to coincide with a busy period in the industry that the students are employed in, in order to minimise the burden on them having to come in to the institution. The student perception was that the technical nature of the on-line subject required more direct lecturer input and online delivery was not necessarily the most appropriate mechanism of delivering this subject. However, student performance on the module was comparable, if not better, than on more traditionally delivered modules.
- 3.41 Another institution also introduced a 'virtual delivery approach' to one of their Foundation Degree courses on the basis that employers appeared to be reluctant to release their staff. However, this system did not work particularly well and a less-intensive approach was finally adopted
- 3.42 One institution felt that on-line delivery was inappropriate due to the cost of updating internal IT systems. This can be seen as follows:
- *"There are limitations to the amount of virtual learning we can encourage given our physical capacity restraints. We are a traditional red brick institution and historically we have not used IT intensively. It would be very costly to update the Information Technology systems. Due to the majority of the courses still being 3-year honour degree programmes, it is felt that such changes are not at present necessary, although we recognised that improved IT would give the University a competitive advantage over similar institutions".*

Support Arrangements

- 3.43 Nearly three-quarters of students are in agreement (73%) that they have shaped their own learning throughout their Foundation Degree (**Figure 3.3**). Similarly, support from a student's tutor is regarded as helpful by 70% of respondents.
-

3.44 Levels of agreement are less strong on the perceived helpfulness of their line manager and workplace mentor. A large number of students responded “do not know” or said “not applicable”. Similar proportions of full-time and part-time students responded to the question about support from line managers with 41% and 43% agreeing respectively. A higher proportion of full-time students indicated that the question was not applicable or they did not know (25%), compared with part-time students (16%).



Source: YCL Survey 2004

3.45 An issue that has arisen with some Foundation Degrees is that the more academic/technical elements of the programme can be difficult for those students who have come from a non-academic background or are mature students who have been away from the education environment for a number of years.

3.46 In order to address this issue a number of Foundation Degrees have introduced support arrangements for students. These are of benefit if students are struggling with particular elements of their Foundation Degree course and can often be tailored to individual needs.

Examples: Student Support Arrangements

Example 1 (FEC):

In order to help the students to 'get up to speed' they undertake modules in research methods and personal development in the first semester of their Foundation Degree course.

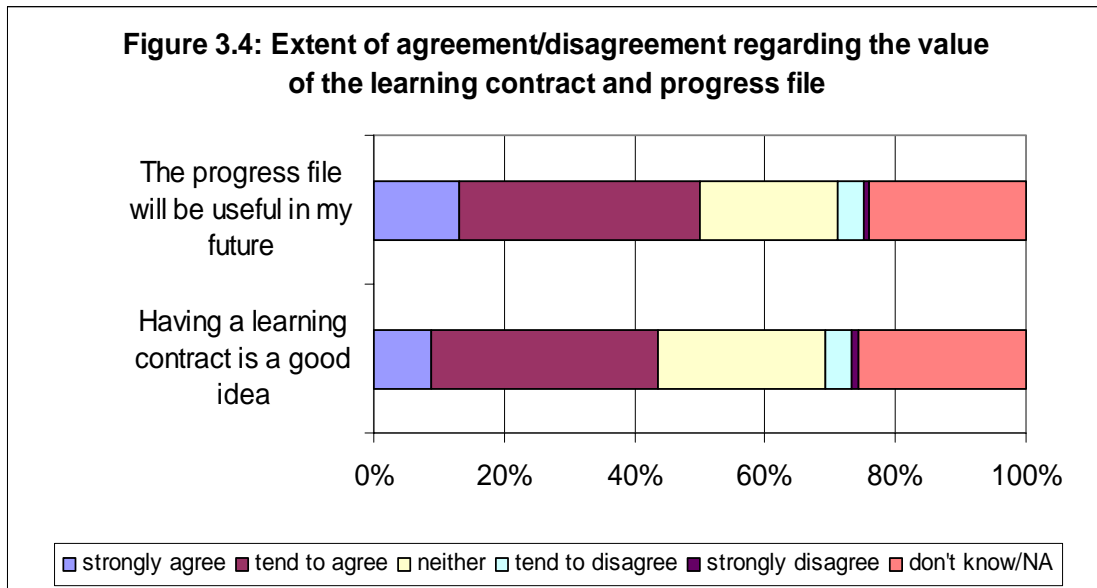
Example 2 (HEI):

During the first year of Foundation Degree programmes, all students must achieve 160 credits, instead of the usual undergraduate 120 credits. This makes for a longer first year, and a more flexible one, giving plenty of room to insert compensatory/remedial modules for all students, if required. For example, if a student needs extra help with Mathematics or IT skills, there will be time to provide this within the normal timetable, without disrupting the schedules or placing additional pressure on students or staff.

Example 3 (FEC):

With the first cohort of Foundation Degree students the college had the expectation that students would have basic IT awareness. It soon became apparent that students had limited IT awareness and so an hour per week of IT support was provided to students for 10 weeks. Students also have an extended induction period in order to help facilitate re-entry into the study environment.

- 3.47 Responding students, when asked their extent of agreement/disagreement regarding the value of their progress file and learning contract were generally in agreement (**Figure 3.4**) that the 'progress file will be useful in their future' (50%) and that 'having a learning contract is a good idea' (44%). Levels of disagreement are very small with large proportions of respondents not knowing or feeling the question was not applicable.
- 3.48 Respondents who were male (47%) are much more likely to agree that 'having a learning contract is a good idea' compared with females (40%). This is also the case with students currently employed full-time (46%) compared to those employed part-time (38%), and students identifying themselves as members of minority ethnic groups (51% compared with whites 46%).
- 3.49 Those with lower academic qualifications prior to starting their Foundation Degree are slightly more likely to agree that the 'progress file will be useful in their future' (level 1 at 56% compared with level 4 at 36%). Similarly, students identifying themselves as members of minority ethnic groups (67%) are also more likely to agree than whites (47%).



3.50 In the North East student survey, 31% of students perceived the 'logbook/progress file' to be useful and very useful.

4 DESTINATION AND PROGRESSION

4.1 One of the core features of Foundation Degrees is that progression within work and/or to an honours degree should be in place. It is stated that:

- there should be guaranteed articulation arrangements with at least one honours degree programme, with clear arrangements for progression to honours degrees and to professional qualifications or higher level NVQs:
- the time taken for progression to the honours degree should normally not exceed 1.3 years for a full-time equivalent student⁴.

4.2 In the majority of programmes, arrangements for students' progression to an honours degree is in place. An example at one HEI is that students can come back to complete an honours degree via 8 top-up modules. This tends to be on a part-time basis as students tend to be in employment by then. As a result, they come back on a week-block basis over 2 years in order to complete their honours degree.

4.3 Two-thirds of the case study Foundation Degree courses had clear progression arrangements in place. In the majority of cases progression is actively encouraged from the outset. This may help to ensure that students are aspiring to complete an honours degree from the very start of their Foundation Degree programme.

Example: Student Progression (HEI)
The University has developed its partnership with FE and other colleges to the extent that the partnership has become a fully-fledged faculty of the university. This level of integration is unique in English HEIs, providing HE progression paths for all students, as well as developing and expanding provision. Most of this expansion has been achieved using Foundation Degree programmes.

⁴ Taken from the Foundation Degree website, www.foundationdegree.org.uk

- 4.4 It would appear that having progression arrangements in place is crucial to students studying for a Foundation Degree. Indeed, 97% of respondents to the student survey indicated that they were likely to complete their Foundation Degree course. With over two-fifths of students suggesting that their main hope as a result of completing their Foundation Degree course was to gain an honours degree, it is essential that the necessary mechanisms are working efficiently to facilitate this progression.
- 4.5 At one college, the availability of progression paths to HEIs is extremely important to students, especially at a local level. The power and influence of the adjacent university is considerable, due to its reputation for excellence in this subject area. The Foundation Degree is therefore seen as a good access path to a prestigious University, where it would otherwise be hard to gain entry as an undergraduate, even with good A-level results.
- 4.6 One of the case study institutions revealed that there is also demand from Foundation Degree students for a master qualification (MSc) to allow FD students to progress even further once they have completed their honours degree. This masters course is in the process of being validated.
- 4.7 There have been some difficulties expressed by institutions in terms of the ease of being able to offer progression routes to honours degrees. These difficulties tend to be related to the specialist nature of the Foundation Degree and the more vocational nature of the programme in comparison to the honours degree. This can be seen as follows:
- *“Whilst actively encouraging students to progress onto honours degrees, due to the specialist subject matter that many of the Foundation Degrees often contain it is difficult to see how students will progress in certain areas”;*
 - *“The fact that Foundation Degrees are not graded means that they do not fit well with honour degrees. It is envisaged that this will cause some students to have problems at the transition stage”;*
 - *“There can be a tension between the academic nature of the honours degree and vocational nature of the Foundation Degree”.*
- 4.8 In order to bridge the gap between a foundation and honours degree, there are examples in a small number of Foundation Degree programmes that require students to complete ‘top-up’ modules prior to going on to the honours degree, as follows:
-

- *“The college offers a two-week intensive bridging unit course prior to the start of an honours degree programme at the college. It aims to fill in the missing gaps required in order to undertake the final year of an honours degree program. The cost of the course is spilt between the college and the student. In the future, the college is aiming to extend the duration of the course to at least three weeks, and for the course to be graded – either pass or fail”;*
- *“The college runs a summer bridging course prior to progression. Some Foundation Degree leaders think this is unfair on students, but it is helpful in sustaining students’ momentum over the summer break”.*

5 EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

5.1 In this section we look at the extent of employer engagement and their contribution to Foundation Degree development. Specifically, the following issues are considered:

- **initial engagement;**
- **course design;**
- **mentoring;**
- **assessment;**
- **employer support for students.**

5.2 The vast majority of Foundation Degrees have effectively involved employers and employer-related organisations to some extent. However, the level and manner of employer engagement is varied throughout the portfolio of Foundation Degree courses. Thus, for some courses the Foundation Degree in terms of design and content is entirely employer-led and driven and can be considered to be evidence of good practice or innovation. For other Foundation Degrees there is less employer engagement and recognition that this is an area that could be developed further.

Initial Engagement

5.3 There are examples where institutions have been very successful in engaging employers. Some Foundation Degree courses will find it easier to engage employers because of the nature of the subject matter. This may be more difficult for Foundation Degrees where there are no obvious and direct industry links. For example, there appears to be a wealth of evidence that in the public sector, conditions are right to support employees through their Foundation Degree. This is demonstrated by the range of courses in the health sector, police, armed forces and others.

5.4 There is evidence of good practice in engaging employers through employer networks, public sector bodies and stakeholder groups, rather than approaching individual employers:

- *“The staff responsible for the development of Foundation Degree programmes have found that it is more productive building relationships with employer networks and groups of organisations, rather than individual employers. Local Community, Voluntary and Service (CVS) partnerships and a voluntary sector training consortium are examples of this”;*
- *“The relationship with the Business Link (which has an office on the university site) has been a big help to the recruitment of businesses to all aspects of the Foundation Degree”;*
- *“In order to support work-related learning, and to oversee the relevance of course content, an industry stakeholder group has been set up. This consists of employers who will have the privilege of paying reduced course fees, in return for providing opportunities for students to learn in the workplace”.*

5.5 Some institutions and Foundation Degree courses have experienced barriers in engaging employers. This is often due to a combination of reasons, but common factors cited include:

- **a general lack of interest from employers;**
- **employers having a lack of understanding of what the Foundation Degree is and the potential benefits to the organisation;**
- **difficulty in engaging small firms employing limited numbers of people.**

5.6 Some institutions considered that small companies are not necessarily in a position to offer work placements or to be involved in course design due to internal resource constraints. One institution also indicated that it was difficult to communicate with small companies, as they often fall outside traditional categories of sector-based activity. There have also been examples of where the generic nature of the qualification is seen as the main barrier to employer involvement.

5.7 There is some evidence that these barriers can be overcome however. Institutions have indicated that while there may be limited awareness among employers and there are perceptions that need to be changed, the general feeling is that persistence and hard work does pay off. There are also examples where employer involvement can be tailored to the individual sector/Foundation Degree course.

Examples: Employer Engagement

Example 1 (FEC)

It has not been possible to engage this closely with employers in this sector because the employer base consists of predominantly small firms employing less than six people. Over many years of delivering HND/HNC programmes, the college has come to understand that local small companies wish to have little input to assessment, but may wish to have some other types of involvement, for example, getting students to help with new product development/testing. The staff see this as a more valid way to genuinely form links with employers than relying on traditional work placements which can be unpredictable in quality and generally uncontrollable in terms of their content and relevance.

Example 2 (FEC)

The Engineering and Technology School plan to develop links with small companies through creating a series of local innovation partnerships – offering component/product development and testing facilities which will give students hands-on projects to work on and providing a service to employers which will link them more closely with the college. Assistance with this will be sought from the RDA and from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). Existing relationships with the HEI's Business and Enterprise Centre will also be used to lend weight to proposals for obtaining development funding.

This is the method preferred by the college to forge links with small employers, using a simple, practical model to engage individual employers with individual students. A number of similar small projects have already been successfully completed by electrical engineering students. Staff intend to approach known contacts in local high value engineering businesses in an attempt to replicate the experience. There is a shortage of higher technician level skills in all sectors of the regional economy. It is felt that the Foundation Degree programmes attract people who are aware of the need for technical competences/skills and whose families/parents encourage participation in Higher Education, especially if it is supplied locally. Similarly, it is hoped that with this type of project, employers will come to notice good students and learn to recognise that the Foundation Degree provides a good supply of skilled people to fill job roles which will contribute to the success of local engineering companies.

Course Design

- 5.8 The analysis of the case study Foundation Degree courses indicated that over two-thirds of programmes involved employer contribution in the design of the course content and syllabus. The more recent Foundation Degrees tend to be designed without necessarily any recourse to HND modules, are more custom built for employers and carry more employer involvement in the design. Employers can help the institution make the academic content more relevant to real work-related issues and vice versa.
- 5.9 There are also cases where employers have approached course leaders to enquire about the possibility of developing specific modules or more tailored delivery approaches to suit their needs.
- 5.10 An example of employer involvement is that of KLM UK Engineering who were involved in the design of the Aircraft Engineering Foundation Degree from the outset. As part of the degree development team, KLM were able to ensure that the course met not only industry needs and academic requirements, but also those of the Joint Aviation Authority (JAA).
- 5.11 At one institution, employers were involved in the initial discussions about the design of a particular Foundation Degree. Their involvement came to an end as a result of employers “arguing amongst themselves” over the course content, which meant that negotiating with them became problematic.

Mentoring

- 5.12 Learning through work requires intensive support and careful management. Students should be encouraged to have an advisor in the workplace to offer support and advice, to provide feedback on progress and to provide a link between the university and the employer. Where it is not possible, appropriate alternative arrangements, such as the provision of mentors and supervision in the workplace, need to be planned and provided.⁵
- 5.13 Less than 50% of the case study Foundation Degree courses have a system where students have a work-place mentor at their place of employment in order to provide that three-way link between the employer, student and the institution.

⁵ City & Guilds (2003) Templates for Developing Foundation Degrees

- 5.14 At one institution this triangular relationship is considered very important. The university takes the view that a Foundation Degree is for the individual and therefore is the individual's responsibility to set up necessary arrangements with their employer. The employer and mentor also have direct dialogue which provides opportunities for confirmation of learning outcomes and evidence of the student implementing their learning.
- 5.15 It is difficult in sectors such as childminding, where individuals tend to work in isolation to create an environment where employers can provide feedback or have a mentor in place. To solve this issue, there are examples of where staff at the institution act as a mentor. An innovative approach has also been developed by individual childminders who have linked up together to act as mentors for each other.

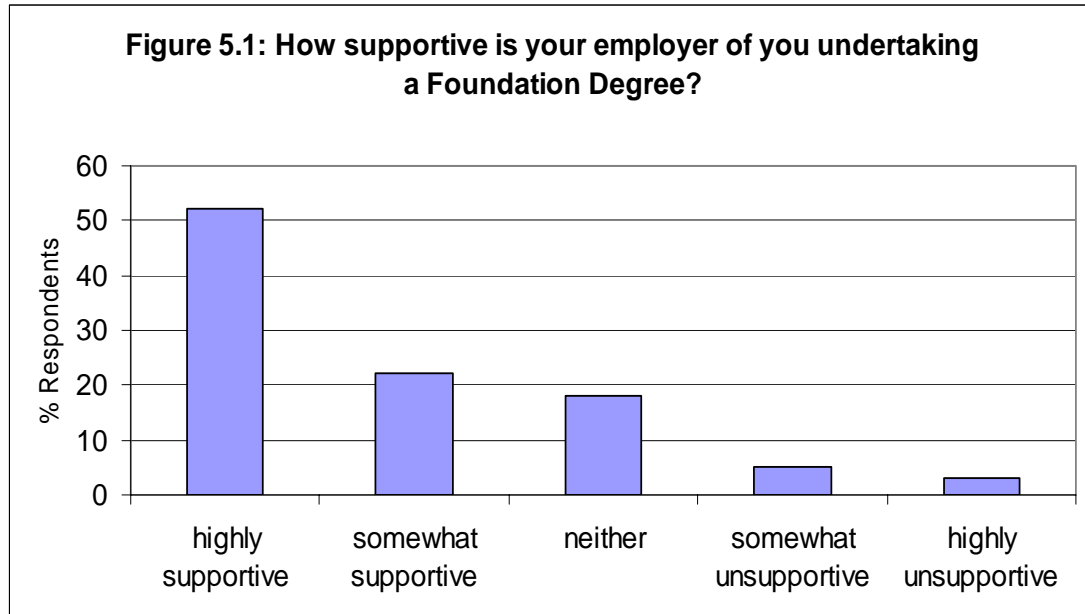
Assessment

- 5.16 Around a quarter of the case study Foundation Degree courses involved employers providing assessment as part of the programme, although just over half involved employers in the design of the assessment procedures. On one Foundation Degree programme, employers are asked to complete an evaluation report on a student's performance on their placement. Employers are asked to comment on general performance, commitment, reliability and conduct, amongst other criteria.
- 5.17 There are some very different philosophies within institutions in terms of the quality assurance process and the creation of relationships with employers. Some academics feel uncertain that employers are able to undertake any aspects of assessment, with one institution expressing concern that some employers may be "biased towards their own employees".

Employer Support

- 5.18 Just over a half (52%) of respondents feel that their employer is highly supportive of them undertaking a Foundation Degree. A further fifth (22%) feel their employer is somewhat supportive. Examples of such support include employers either partly or completely funding their study, or allowing employees time off in recognition of the demands of studying for a Foundation Degree.

5.19 Students linked to one large public sector programme were significantly more likely to access a higher level of support (96%).



Source: YCL Survey 2004

5.20 Less than 10% of respondents feel that their employer has been unsupportive of them undertaking a Foundation Degree. An example from the case studies was an employer who found it hard to cover for staff on the Foundation Degree course. Even after agreeing time off for study, the employer often insisted on staff making up the time by working extra hours, sometimes without being paid.

5.21 There is evidence of concern from students of the level of understanding that their employer has of their Foundation Degree. However, there are students who question how the Foundation Degree is perceived by employers and their level of understanding and how it will impact on future career prospects. This can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“Until it is more widely advertised I’m not confident that employers will be taking this qualification seriously”;*
- *“I do not feel that my employers were knowledgeable”;*
- *“My main concern is whether employers will actually recognise the senior practitioner status gained on completion and whether they will be able or want to recognise it in increased salary to reflect the work and expertise needed to get through the course”;*

Evaluation of Foundation Degrees

- *“I fear employers may not recognise it and therefore will not expand my career opportunities”*

5.22 There are also examples of students who are unlikely to want their employer to know they are studying for a Foundation Degree, because it is being used as a vehicle to change career.

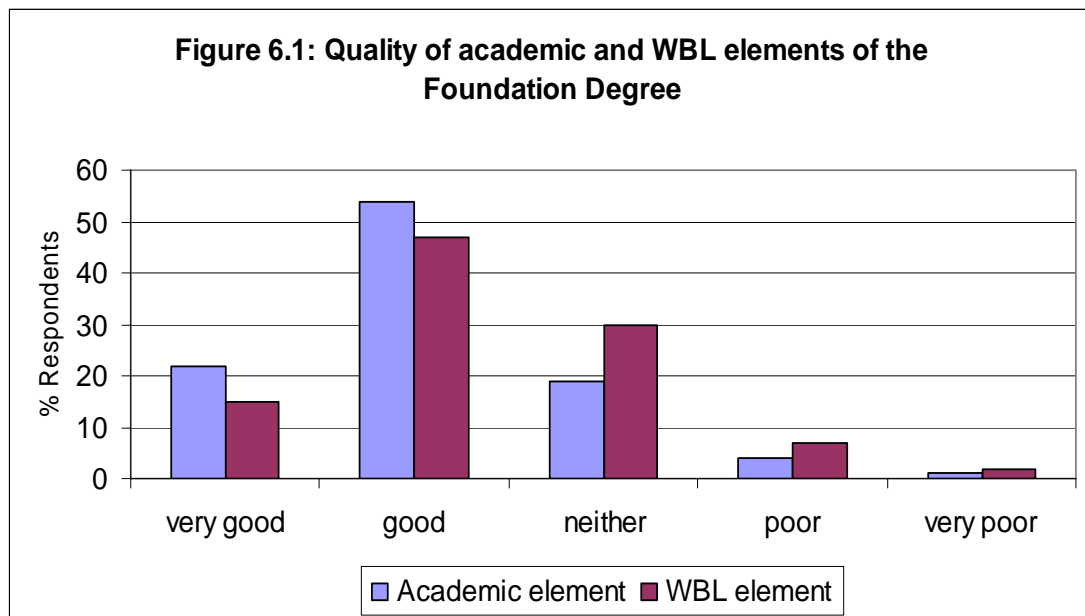
6 QUALITY AND IMPROVEMENT

6.1 In this section we look at the quality of Foundation Degrees that are on offer and discuss some potential areas to improve the courses available to students. Specifically, the following issues are considered:

- **student perceptions;**
- **skills coverage;**
- **planning;**
- **quality of teaching;**
- **delivery methods;**
- **tutor support;**
- **other areas for development.**

Student Perceptions

6.2 In terms of the quality of the key aspects of Foundation Degree delivery students feel more positive about the academic element with 76% believing it to be good or very good (**Figure 6.1**). Students are less certain about the work-based learning elements with slightly fewer (62%) perceiving it to be good or very good.



Source: YCL Survey 2004

- 6.3 Similar levels were identified in the North East research where 71% of respondents perceived the 'overall quality of their academic learning experience' to be good or very good. Three-fifths of respondents perceived the 'overall quality of their work-based learning experience' to be good or very good.

Skills Coverage

- 6.4 In terms of the different types of skills covered in Foundation Degrees, students generally feel that they are about right for technical, academic, transferable and vocational aspects, as seen in **Table 6.1**. A fifth (21%) of students feel that technical skills could be increased.

Table 6.1: Balance across Skills Areas				
	<i>Technical</i> %	<i>academic</i> %	<i>transferable</i> %	<i>vocational</i> %
Too much	3	12	1	2
About right	77	82	88	85
Too little	21	6	11	14

Source: YCL Survey 2004, percentages may not total 100 due to rounding

- 6.5 There are examples of institutions operating a continuous improvement policy towards all of their programmes, a practice that should be encouraged. For example, at one FEC, Foundation Degree courses are already seeing the benefits of changes made as staff learn more about how best to design and deliver programmes. Course stakeholder groups are continuously being built up for every programme, containing employers, professional body representatives and others with an interest.

Planning

- 6.6 There is some concern from students that their Foundation Degree has been poorly planned, which then has an adverse effect on their learning experience. This appears to be the case in particular where the Foundation Degree is a new course and it has taken some time to 'get up to speed' in terms of delivery. This can be seen in the following quotes:

- *“I believe they are basically a good way of learning, but the college was not geared up for the students at the start of the course, or at each new semester. This left our group feeling like guinea pigs and having to play catch-up”;*
- *“I feel that the Foundation Degree is a good idea but it has certain flaws which need to be dealt with. Personally, in my situation, the structure of my course is very poor and ill-planned”;*
- *“When I signed up this was the first year this course had been taught, so we have been used as guinea pigs to set the pace for following students”;*
- *“The course is excellent but at times lacks planning due to it being the first year the course has been run”;*
- *“Having adapted the course from an existing HND the instruction is still developing”.*

6.7 This can be used as evidence to suggest that the planning of Foundation Degree courses needs to be improved and be more consistent. However, as Foundation Degree programmes become more integrated within an institution, this is likely to improve over time.

Quality of Teaching

6.8 There is evidence from students that the quality of teaching on their Foundation Degree has been of good quality:

- *“All the lecturers have worked in the industry so have a deep insight into the degree”;*
- *“The standard of teaching is better than any previous teaching given to me in previous higher education learning”.*

6.9 However, others feel that the quality of teaching is variable and inconsistent which impacts on the students’ understanding of the subject area and material. This can be seen as follows:

- *“All tutors should have clear guidelines on marking criteria and teaching methods. This is very confusing at times to the students, as tutors seem to have different methods of teaching the same items and different understanding”;*

Evaluation of Foundation Degrees

- *“There have been times when a shortage of staff has impeded the quality of teaching”;*
- *“In the first year the quality of teaching was excellent. However in the second year it went a bit downhill due to having trainee rather than experienced lecturers”;*
- *“I find that the standard is very inconsistent and can vary widely from lecturer to lecturer”;*
- *“Some lecturers are highly competent. Others are relatively inexperienced in the field they are teaching”;*
- *“Some tutors were not qualified to instruct the modules they were teaching”.*

Delivery Methods

6.10 The methods of delivery have been questioned by some Foundation Degree students. In some cases this is down to the individual teaching styles of lecturers. There are also examples of staff shortages and inexperienced tutors impacting on the quality of delivery. This is evidenced in the following quotes:

- *“The majority of instructors are good. However, some are poor and the emphasis is on passing exams rather than understanding the subject”;*
- *“Due to the different styles of teaching some instructors make the subject easier to understand while others make it harder”;*
- *“I believe that some lecturers need to update their teaching skills and ways of delivering course material to suit everybody’s learning styles”;*
- *“Not all the instructors know how to explain or use different methods of teaching when a student struggles to understand”;*
- *“Some of the lecturers seem only to want to rush through their script and not allow questions. This is very annoying when a subject has been pitched way above the student’s level of knowledge”;*
- *“Teaching is generic and not tailored to individual needs”;*
- *“The standard of tuition is adequate but not good enough to excel”.*

Tutor Support

6.11 There is evidence that students do appreciate the support they have received from tutors in terms of managing their workload and getting them through the Foundation Degree course:

- *“Due to the nature of my employment I have found the workload of the degree demanding to the point where I have fallen behind. However, the support from the degree course tutors has been excellent”;*
- *“The lecturers are very understanding and supportive. The students feel that they are on your side and are backing you 100% to get you through the course”.*

6.12 However, there are also examples of where tutor support mechanisms to students could be improved. Students would appreciate more tutor guidance, input and individual attention in some cases. Some students have to turn to fellow students for the necessary support. This can be seen as follows:

- *“I am often left to my own devices and have relied on other students and family for support”;*
- *“I expected more tutor guidance but having not previously been educated to this standard I am unsure whether this is normal for a degree”;*
- *“There is not enough individual attention”;*
- *“There is not much input or advice from tutors. It is more support from other colleagues online”;*
- *“At times it feels like the students are left to interpret the course on their own with little guidance”.*

Other areas for development

6.13 Other areas identified in this research to be considered for further development and improvement, include the following:

- employers need more information about Foundation Degrees in order to encourage them to contribute to Foundation Degree development;

Evaluation of Foundation Degrees

- innovative approaches to engaging employers need to be encouraged in order to ensure that sector requirements are being met and to increase employer involvement in Foundation Degree design, delivery and development;
- there is a need for a real definition of the work-based learning element of the Foundation Degree. However, there is a need to ensure the right balance between being prescriptive and encouraging innovation;
- best practice in terms of Foundation Degree design and delivery, employer engagement and work-based/related learning should be distributed to all institutions involved in Foundation Degree development (this is clearly a role for FDF, which they recognise);
- student support and guidance mechanisms need to be improved so that students are given the best chance of completing their Foundation Degree course;
- a review of teaching methods needs to be undertaken by institutions in order to ensure that the needs of students are being met.

7 CONCLUSIONS & IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT

7.1 In this section we present our conclusions and implications for policy in terms of the development of Foundation Degrees. Our conclusions are presented under the following headings:

- **student sample characteristics;**
- **institution philosophy;**
- **design;**
- **operation;**
- **partnership and collaboration.**

Student Sample Characteristics

7.2 A total of 841 Foundation Degree students responded to the survey. The majority (58%) are in the first year of their Foundation Degree course. Just over half (51%) of students are female. A significant proportion (92%) of students are aged between 18 and 45, with two-fifths in the 18-25 age bracket. There is an equal distribution between full-time and part-time study, with just under two-thirds (63%) of students currently in full-time employment. Just over a tenth of Foundation Degree students are from minority ethnic groups with 2% registered disabled.

7.3 The main reasons students identified for wanting to study for a Foundation Degree relate to **gaining an HE qualification** (31%), **progressing to an honours degree** (21%) and **studying whilst at work** (16%).

Institution Philosophy

7.4 Foundation Degrees are supported by institutions and perceived as worthwhile. **Generally for pre-1992 universities, Foundation Degrees are seen as more of a development area** with there being some way to go to embed them into the general consciousness of the institution.

7.5 Foundation Degrees are seen by institutions as a **major opportunity to tackle strategic aims** such as addressing skills shortages and widening participation.

Design

- 7.6 Foundation Degree programmes cover a **diversity of subject areas**. Courses are often tailored to a specific vocational area or have been designed in response to a niche market. This diversity also reflects the particular character and nature of Foundation Degree courses.
- 7.7 Foundation Degrees have been **well-planned in order to meet the needs of students and employers**. A wide range of teaching, learning and delivery methods are available to students, with this flexibility including on-line learning for example. Appropriate support mechanisms are also available to students in many institutions in order to ensure that they successfully complete their Foundation Degree course.

Operation

- 7.8 **Recruitment levels for Foundation Degrees are high** which reflects the level of employer/student demand. Issues have arisen however in relation to over-supply, 'backward migration' and market erosion which need to be monitored by institutions. Institutions are generally experiencing few problems in terms of retention. There are however a small number of courses which experience attrition in year one of the programme, often where students from a non-educational background struggle to cope with the work/study balance.
- 7.9 The approach to **work-based learning is mixed across Foundation Degree courses**. There is evidence of innovative approaches being adopted. In some cases however, meaningful work-related learning is seen as more appropriate where the nature of the sector does not necessary facilitate a work-based approach. Students perceive there to be an appropriate balance between the level of WBL and academic content in their Foundation Degree course.
- 7.10 **Clear progression arrangements are in place for the majority of students** on Foundation Degrees and institutions tend to actively encourage progression from the outset. Some institutions offer 'top-up' modules in order to bridge a perceived gap between the more 'vocational' Foundation Degree and 'academic' Foundation Degree.

- 7.11 There has also been **positive feedback from Foundation Degree students on the quality of teaching, delivery methods and tutor support.**

Partnership and Collaboration

- 7.12 There is **evidence of high levels of collaboration** between HEIs and FECs in terms of programme design and development. Despite some tensions between the two sets of organisations, positive arrangements are in place in terms of programme design, validation and assessment.
- 7.13 **Key stakeholders and partners are involved in programme design and development to some extent. Employer involvement is mixed** but there are positive examples of the engagement of employers and industry organisations in identifying sector needs and requirements and thus the design, development and delivery of Foundation Degree programmes. This is an element that should continue to be improved, particularly the level of employer involvement in student assessment procedures.

Implications for Policy Development

- 7.14 We now consider the implications of these findings for future Foundation Degree development.

Philosophy

- 7.15 There is a need for continued work and effort to embed Foundation Degrees into the general consciousness of the institution (pre-1992 universities in particular) and to make them an obvious option to students.

Design

- 7.16 Academic background and prior knowledge in some courses is an important factor and needs to be considered as students without this underpinning knowledge can struggle on their Foundation Degree Course. Institutions should be encouraged to use interviews, tests and individualised guidance/advice sessions to recruit all students;

7.17 It is important that institutions provide support to students in the process of organising a placement with employers for the purpose of work-based learning. It is essential that the work-based learning undertaken is relevant to either the subject of their Foundation Degree course or to their employment.

Operation

7.18 The quality of teaching, delivery methods and tutor support could be improved in order to develop the student experience. There is some scope to review teaching and learning opportunities and support mechanisms to meet the needs of a diverse client group.

Employer Involvement

7.19 Employer engagement is often more effective when this takes place through employer networks, public sector bodies and stakeholder groups, rather than approaching individual employers.

7.20 Employer involvement is more effective when it can be tailored to the individual sector/Foundation Degree course.

7.21 It is essential that employers are involved in the design, development delivery and regular review of Foundation Degree programmes. Employer involvement in student assessment procedures is an area that could also be improved.

Partnership and Collaboration

7.22 The role of key stakeholders and partners in programme design and development can be improved. It is crucial that RDAs and SSCs do as much as possible, with the help of institutions, to better understand their respective and collaborative roles in relation to HE/Foundation Degree development.

ANNEX A: DATASETS

Datasets					
	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Website	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS) Report	Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) Data	Higher Education Students Early Statistics (HESES) Data	Individualised Learner Record (ILR)
Summary	Courses offered by institution (FT & PT)	FT students on FDs only. PT students do not apply through UCAS	FT & PT student numbers on FDs and new starters (new starts 02/03 only). Seen as the definitive version in terms of 02/03 FD student data.	FT & PT students on FDs and new starters (new starts 02/03 only)	Students studying at FE Colleges funded directly from HEFCE
Purpose	Provides information to potential students looking to go on to FE/HE.	Provides information on the number of successful and unsuccessful applicants.	Necessary university return at the end of each academic year. Provides detail about the last student cohort in both HE and FE Institutions.	Provides detail about volumes of students only – no individual student characteristics	
Format	Web-based database	Database	Database	Database	Database
Format available to YCL	Web-based database	Paper-based	Database	Paper-based	Database
Latest figures held	To date	July 03	July 03	December 03 (snapshot)	01/02
Coverage	UK HEIs & FEIs	UK HEIs and (most of the larger) FEIs	UK HEIs only	English HEIs & FEIs	England

ANNEX B: STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE



York Consulting

Foundation Degrees Student Questionnaire

York Consulting Limited is undertaking an evaluation of Foundation Degrees for the Department for Education and Skills (DfES). We would appreciate your participation in this important study by completing the questionnaire below. Your response will be valuable in helping to gain an understanding of the nature and range of Foundation Degrees in order to inform the future development of Foundation Degree Policy.

This questionnaire is for students currently studying for a Foundation Degree. We expect it will take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

All questionnaires received by the deadline date of **Tuesday 1st June 2004** will automatically be entered into a prize draw. The first 20 names to be drawn out of the hat will receive a £50 gift voucher that can be used in a wide range of high street shops including HMV, Boots and JJB Sports.

Your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be seen by members of the York Consulting team. Under no circumstances will there be any disclosure of information that will identify you to third parties.

Thank you for your time

1. Are you currently studying for a Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

Yes (1) Please go to Question 2

No (2) Thank you for your time. You do not need to complete the remainder of the questionnaire

2. Where do you study for your Foundation Degree course? *(please tick all that apply)*

University	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	My existing employer premises	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Higher Education College	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Home	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
A placement employer	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Other <i>(please specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
Further Education College	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)		

3. What is the name of the institution are you studying at? *(please specify)*

.....

4. Which university awards your Foundation Degree? *(please specify)*

.....

5. What year of your Foundation Degree course are you in? *(please tick one box)*

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)

6. What is the title of the Foundation Degree course that you are studying? *(please specify)*

.....

7. Which of the following best describes the sector relating to your course? *(please tick one box)*

Agriculture, Horticulture & Animal Care	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Logistics and Transport Services	<input type="checkbox"/> (11)
Arts – Creative Arts & Design	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Languages, Literature & Cultural Studies	<input type="checkbox"/> (12)
Building, Construction and Property	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Law/Social Studies/Politics/Economics	<input type="checkbox"/> (13)
Education & Training	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	Manufacturing & Industrial Design	<input type="checkbox"/> (14)
Computer Sciences and Information Services	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)	Marketing, E-Commerce and Retailing	<input type="checkbox"/> (15)
Business/Management Studies & Administration	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)	Media Studies – Communications, Journalism, Publishing	<input type="checkbox"/> (16)
Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)	Performing Arts	<input type="checkbox"/> (17)
Environmental Conservation & Emergency Services	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)	Personal Development, Care & Appearance	<input type="checkbox"/> (18)
Health, Complementary Medicine & Safety	<input type="checkbox"/> (9)	Science & Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> (19)
Hospitality, Tourism & Leisure Services	<input type="checkbox"/> (10)	Sports Studies/Science	<input type="checkbox"/> (20)
		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (21)

.....

8. Is your Foundation Degree course full or part-time? *(please tick one box)*

Full Time	Part Time
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)

9. Which of the following methods of study does your course include? *(please tick all that apply)*

Lectures (on campus)	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Distance learning	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Lectures (other method)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	E-learning	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
Tutorials (on campus)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Mentoring in the workplace	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
Tutorials (other method)	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)

.....

STRUCTURE & DELIVERY OF YOUR FOUNDATION DEGREE:

10. How would you rate the quality of teaching in the academic parts of your Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor
<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)

11. Please explain why you responded in this way to Question 10 above?

.....

12. What proportion of your Foundation Degree involves an element of work-based learning directly with an employer? *(please tick one box)*

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)

13. Do you think that this is the ideal proportion of work-based learning? *(please tick one box)*

Yes (1) Please go to Question 15
 No (2) Please go to Question 14

14. What would be a more suitable proportion of work-based learning? *(please tick one box)*

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)

15. How would you rate the quality of the work-based learning component of your Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

16. Please explain why you responded in this way to Question 15 above?

.....

17. Please fill in the following table to indicate whether you feel your Foundation Degree has the right balance in terms of developing the different types of skills needed in the workplace. *(please tick one box in each row)*

	Too much	About right	Too little
a) Technical skills	(1)	(2)	(3)
b) Academic skills	(1)	(2)	(3)
c) Transferable skills	(1)	(2)	(3)
d) Vocational skills	(1)	(2)	(3)

18. To what extent do you agree/disagree with the following statements? *(please tick one box in each row)*

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know or N/A
a) I have managed & shaped my own learning	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
b) Support from my tutor has been helpful	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
c) Support from my mentor has been helpful	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
d) Support from my line manager has been helpful	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
e) Having a learning contract is a good idea	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
d) The progress file will be useful in my future	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)

19. How likely is it that you will complete your Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

Very Likely	Likely	Unlikely	Very unlikely
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
<i>(Please go to qtn 21)</i>	<i>(Please go to qtn 21)</i>	<i>(Please go to qtn 20)</i>	<i>(Please go to qtn 20)</i>

20. Please explain why you have responded in this way to Question 19 above?

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EMPLOYMENT AND QUALIFICATIONS:

21. What was your main employment status, including voluntary and paid work, in the year prior to starting your Foundation Degree? *(please tick all that apply)*

Full time employment	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Registered unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
Part time employment	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Not employed	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)
		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)

.....

22. Were you a student in the academic year prior to starting your Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

Yes (1) No (2)

23. Please indicate which of the following qualifications you currently hold, and where specified, how many? *(please tick all that apply)*

a) Degree of degree equivalent or above	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)
b) Other higher education below degree level	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)
c) A level vocational level 3 or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
– If A level(s) how many?	
d) Trade Apprenticeship	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)
e) GCSE/O level grade A-C, vocational level 2 qualification or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
– If GCSE/O level(s) grade A-C, how many?	
f) GCSE/O level below grade C, vocational level 1 qualification or equivalent	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
g) Other qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
– <i>(please specify)</i>	
h) No qualifications	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)

24. What is your current employment status, including voluntary and paid work? *(please tick one box)*

Full time employment <i>(Please go to qtn 25)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Registered unemployed <i>(Please go to qtn 29)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
Part time employment <i>(Please go to qtn 25)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Not employed <i>(Please go to qtn 29)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)
		Other <i>(please Specify and go to qtn 25)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)

.....

25. What category best describes your current occupation? *(please tick one box)*

Manager/Administrator	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Craft & related occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Professional occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Sales occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
Associate professional & technical occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Personal & protective service occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
Clerical & secretarial occupation	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	Plant & machine operative	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)
		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (9)

.....

26. In what sector are you employed? *(please tick one box)*

Agriculture & fishing	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Distribution, hotels & restaurants	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Energy & water	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Transport & communications	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Finance & business services	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
Construction	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	Public administration, education & health	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)
		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (9)

.....

27. How relevant is the Foundation Degree that you are studying for to your occupation? *(please tick one box)*

Highly relevant	Somewhat relevant	Neither relevant nor irrelevant	Somewhat irrelevant	Highly irrelevant
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

28. How supportive is your employer of you undertaking a Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

Highly supportive	Somewhat supportive	Neither supportive nor unsupportive	Somewhat unsupportive	Highly unsupportive
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

STUDENT MOTIVATION/ASPIRATIONS:

29. What sources of funding do you access to do your Foundation Degree? *(please tick all that apply)*

Own	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Student or other loan	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Parents	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Employer contribution	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
Employer	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Bursary	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
Student Grant (from your local authority)	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	Career Development Loan (CDL)	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)
		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (9)

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30. How did you hear about this Foundation Degree course? *(please tick all that apply)*

Direct from the institution	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Radio/Press advertising	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)
My boss/Employer	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Careers/Connexions service	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Website <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Recommended by friend/colleague	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
.....		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)

31. What is the main reason for deciding to study for a Foundation Degree? *(please tick one box)*

A higher education qualification	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Close relationship with employers	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)
Flexible delivery methods	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Opportunities to progress to honours degree level	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)
Opportunity to undertake higher education while in work	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	Emphasis on work-based & work-related learning	<input type="checkbox"/> (7)
Preparation for work through a vocationally specific curriculum	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (8)

32. What improvements (if any) could be made to your Foundation Degree course?

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33. What do you hope to gain as a result of completing your Foundation Degree? *(please tick one only)*

New employment	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	Honours Degree	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)
Promotion at work	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	Nothing specific	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)
		Other <i>(please Specify)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)

34. To what extent do you agree/disagree that your Foundation Degree will help to improve your employability or career prospects? *(please tick one box)*

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

35. To what extent do you agree/disagree that your Foundation Degree will help you to fulfil your future aspirations? *(please tick one box)*

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS:

36. Gender?

Male (1) Female (2)

37. Where are you currently living? *(please tick one box)*

Parent's home (1) Own home (3)
Rented house or halls of residence (2) Other *(please Specify)* (4)
.....

38. Ethnicity? *(please tick one box)*

White	Mixed	Indian	Pakistani	Bangladeshi	Other Asian	Caribbean	African
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)

Other Black *(please specify)* (9)
Other Ethnic Group *(please specify)* (10)

39. Are you registered disabled?

Yes (1) No (2)

40. Please provide your details below *(This will allow the gift voucher to be forwarded to you should you be successful in the draw. These details will be confidential and will not be passed on to any third party)*

First Name: Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

E-mail Address:

Date of Birth:

Home Tel No: Mobile Tel No:

41. Would you be happy to be contacted again, in the future, as part of this research into Foundation Degrees? *(please tick one box)*

Yes (1) No (2)

42. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) may like to find out about your qualifications, education or training from administrative records to add to the information we have collected today. Like everything you have told us, the information collected from the records will be treated confidentially. Names and addresses will never be included in the results and no individual can be identified from the research. Do you give your permission for us to pass this information to DfES for this purpose? *(please tick one box)*

Yes (1) No (2)

43. Please use this space to make any other comments about Foundation Degrees?

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Thank you for taking the time to fill in this questionnaire.

Please return this questionnaire in the reply paid envelope provided to York Consulting, Smithfield House. 92 North Street, Leeds, LS2 7PN.

If you have any questions please contact Matt Antill on T:0113 222 3545 F:0113 222 3540 or e-mail matt.antill@yorkconsulting.co.uk

Your responses will be treated in the strictest confidence and will only be seen by members of the York Consulting team. Under no circumstances will there be any disclosure of information to third parties.

YCL Data Protection Act Registration Number: PZ7752245